Partake or Be Departed: Insularity of Setting within the Dystopian Imagination and The Mark: The Beast Rules the World

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Abstract

Insularity of setting within the dystopia is a motif that is shared between works of dystopian fiction and works in the utopian imagination as a whole. Each dystopia or utopia is unique in how it creates and uses insularity of setting to facilitate the confinement of its subjected society to a prescribed set of social, political, religious, and economic practices. Timothy LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins use the framework of rapture fiction and the motif of insularity of setting to create an international dystopia in their novel *The Mark: The Beast Rules the World*. The global insularity conceived within *The Mark* is unique in light of the traditionally isolated insularity found in classic dystopian and utopian works. The study of insularity of setting in the works of More's *Utopia*, Orwell's *1984*, and Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* can be applied to the insularity found in *The Mark*, contributing to a better understanding of how this motif is used in dystopian fiction and how it works to create a globally insular dystopia in *The Mark*.

Introduction

Timothy LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins's novel *The Mark: The Beast Rules the World* is a dystopian work of rapture fiction from the greater Left Behind series of novels. Identifying the work as rapture fiction is important to understanding the context of the dystopian setting within the novel. Rapture fiction is a subgenre of apocalyptic fiction that Matthew Guest identifies as being "ultimately inspired by John Nelson Darby's 19th century formulation of the end times, characterized by the rapture, tribulation, rise of the Antichrist, battle of Armageddon, and culminating in the triumphant second coming of Jesus in advance of the millennium" (1). Knowing that the setting of the novel takes place in a postrapture, premillennial apocalyptic world helps create a dystopian frame of mind for the reader. The reader quickly realizes that the novel's setting is dystopian because of the rapture-fiction framework as well as the recognition of Satan indwelling in Nicolae Carpathia as the world's all-powerful leader.

In this setting, a key dystopian motif that contributes to the novel's framework and plot is insularity of setting. Insularity of setting within the utopian imagination can be traced back to Thomas More's *Utopia* and can also be traced in the settings of classic dystopian novels such as George Orwell's *1984* and Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*. Insularity of setting within the utopian imagination helps to confine the social, political, religious, and economic areas of a society, all of which that society's citizens must partake of, or else face exclusion, expulsion, punishment, or even death. A unique aspect of the insularity found within LaHaye and Jenkins's *The Mark* is that it is global, forcing all people around the world to either take a loyalty mark in order to live and be part of the global society instituted by Nicolae Carpathia, or face death from the society's authorities. This insularity is not confined to a specific geographical location as found in the traditional utopian or dystopian imagination such as More's island of Utopia, Orwell's Oceania, or Bradbury's futuristic city in *Fahrenheit 451*. It is found in the all-encompassing system of government enacted by Nicolae Carpathia and the Global Community. The only escape from the dystopian insularity in this postrapture setting comes from the shared hope of those people who have become Christians during the tribulation and await the return of their savior, Jesus Christ. In this way, *The Mark* is also unique. The hope for escape from dystopia to a possible utopian future is not able to be brought about through any human action other than faith in Jesus Christ. This faith promises an eternal utopia in Heaven, which provides motivation to the novel's protagonists, the Tribulation Force, in their pursuits of evangelizing others and ministering to fellow believers.

Through examination of scholarly criticism on *The Mark* specifically and the Left Behind generally, an evident lack of scholarship exists concerning the novel and series as works of dystopian fiction becomes clear. Some criticism exists concerning theological matters and eschatological beliefs displayed in the novel and by its authors, but this criticism does little to qualify the value of the novel and the series as works of literature within the dystopian imagination, even if that imagination is fueled by deeply held religious beliefs from the authors and primary readership alike. Much other criticism of the novel and series, however, can be applied to the study of the dystopian framework contained in *The Mark*. The novel's background as a work of rapture fiction, the unified global economy in place in the novel, and the use of technology, both to help facilitate global insularity by the antagonist and to assist in evangelism by the protagonists, are all discussed in criticism of the novel and can all be applied to the study of insularity of setting in the novel. Through examination of the dystopian motif of insularity of setting within *The Mark* and its similarity to the insularity of setting found within other dystopian and utopian works, a clearer understanding of how the novel operates as a work of dystopian fiction within the subgenre of rapture fiction is found.

Criticism Overview of The Mark: The Beast Rules the World

The Mark: The Beast Rules the World offers a unique blend of apocalyptic and dystopian fiction through the lens of biblical interpretation related to end-time events. Scholarship surrounding the novel and its greater series, Left Behind, offers a wide range of topics. Some topics focus on the theological views of the series's authors, but others focus on the value of the novels as works of literature that offer interesting perspectives on social, economic, cultural, and technological themes. Some of these themes can be applied directly to studying the utopian imagination, specifically the dystopia. Essays from Matthew Guest, Andrew Strombeck, Felicia Wu Song, and Gorman Beauchamp provide a good overview of scholarship about or related to *The Mark* that starts from a broad historical context and narrows to a more focused look at the use of technology, which can be applied to the study of insularity of setting found within the novel and dystopian/utopian literature.

An informative overview of the Left Behind series of novels and their context within apocalyptic dystopian literature is found in Matthew Guest's essay "Keeping the End in Mind: *Left Behind*, the Apocalypse and the Evangelical Imagination." Guest provides scholarship on the historical context of the Left Behind series as a whole within the subgenre of rapture fiction produced in Christian literature (1). Through giving a background on the context of rapture fiction, Guest provides insight into the evangelical imagination that has produced it.

Because the evangelical imagination is grounded in certain eschatological beliefs, although these differ between the numerous divisions and denominations of Christianity, one approach to rapture fiction, such as the Left Behind series, has been to view it in the context of instrumentalization of the novel. Guest defines instrumentalization as "a tendency to articulate . . . significance chiefly in terms of a means to a particular end, most frequently assumed to be some kind of ideological agenda" (3). Guest proceeds to detail how much of the scholarship about the Left Behind novels revolves around the idea of the novels' instrumentalization. This approach, however, does not attempt to fully understand or appreciate the novels as works of literature, and it also assumes that readers are either advocates for instrumentalization from the genre or those opposed to such instrumentalization, leaving no room for a general readership. Guest backs up the reasoning behind this instrumentalization idea with details from the Left Behind series authors, Timothy LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins. Guest mentions their beliefs, positions within evangelical Christianity, and previous work. His essay, however, goes beyond looking at the perception of the novels themselves and details their position in imaginative literature. Guest cites anthropologist Vincent Crapanzano for his view of the connection of apocalyptic ideas to the utopian imagination: "The utopian imagination is—suddenly, powerfully, and briefly—inflamed by the immediate prospect of radical change, by visions of an apocalypse now" (8). In this sense, *The Mark: The Beast Rules*

the World, from the Left Behind series, showcases the postapocalyptic view of dystopian literature within the framework of rapture fiction and the utopian imagination.

In his essay "Invest in Jesus: Neoliberalism and the Left Behind Novels," Andrew Strombeck discusses the cultural and economic basis for both the novels themselves and the interconnected society within the novels. Strombeck argues that neoliberalism and capitalism contribute to the series's mass popularity. Instead of being an evangelical series that is written from a culturally isolated perspective, Strombeck notes, "The books refuse to condemn multiculturalism and in fact emphasize the multicultural composition of their protagonist group. The overall effect of these choices is to emphasize fundamentalism's continuity, not discontinuity, with postmodernity" (165). Strombeck shows that the Left Behind characters are a multicultural group that reflects the global economy and the goal of evangelicalism to reach a global audience. There are characters in the Tribulation Force from a variety of races and nationalities. The books were mass-marketed and sold in the same globalized economy. *The Mark: The Beast Rules the World* has a plot that centers on this idea of a globalized society and economy. In these ways, Strombeck's essay is helpful in understanding how economic and cultural factors play a role in *The Mark*.

Despite the Left Behind series's popularity and multicultural characteristics, Strombeck makes an interesting note from another scholar, Melani McCalister, who has written about the books. McCalister states that the books have been "all but invisible in liberal and intellectual circles" (161). Strombeck uses this lack of visibility to emphasize arguments showing the dichotomy between the series' global reach and its perceived narrow focus. The series also shows an unlikely positive view of technology, according to Strombeck, in that its protagonists take advantage of the latest technology to reach others with their evangelical message. This view of technology in positive terms related to the protagonists within a dystopian setting is somewhat unique in the genre.

To further study this view of technology and how it plays out in modern culture and in *The Mark*, a look at Felicia Wu Song's essay "Being Left Behind: The Discourse of Fear in Technological Change" (2003) is insightful. Song discusses how the view of technology has changed over time from the period of the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution to modern times. The 2003 publication date of Song's essay should not distract from the application of the essay's main points when applied to 2023. If anything, the progress made in this twenty-year span serves to reinforce Song's ideas. Song details how technology was once viewed from a more positive perspective of universal enlightenment but in modern times has taken on the ability to induce fear, especially of not being able to keep up in a globalized world of capitalistic economies. Song states, "I want to argue that the impetus behind technological adoption is not only the pull of the Utopian dreams of Progress, as many observers

have noted, but also the push of fear—specifically the fear of being left behind" (28). Song ties this idea of being "left behind" to the novels from the Left Behind series by LaHaye and Jenkins. The motif of insularity of setting in *The Mark* can also be tied to this idea of being "left behind" in that the general population is being coerced to take the loyalty mark in order to avoid being left out of society or killed off.

Throughout the series, and especially apparent in *The Mark*, there is a tension between how technology serves positive and negative roles. The loyalty-mark system is one facilitated by technology, but at the same time, the protagonists use technology to communicate with each other and with unbelievers. Song details, however, the connections between technological progress and the idea of the rapture narrative of being left behind. In both cases, there is a fear of being left behind, whether that is being left behind figuratively when not upgrading to the latest technology in business or personal life or literally when the rapture occurs and takes millions out of the world as in LaHaye and Jenkins's novels. Song cites Robert Nisbet's *History of the Idea of Progress* when stating, "Over the last two centuries, the Enlightenment heritage of Progress has by no means been constant or static in American culture" (29). This shows that although technology has progressed constantly, the ideas of whether this progress is positive or negative have changed. Many view technology from the perspective of fear of being left behind. *The Mark* has an interesting blend of using current technologies in ways that support the protagonists but also echo the idea of the fear of being left behind, especially in the case of those who choose to follow Carpathia out of fear.

With a more in-depth focus on technology and dystopian literature, Gorman Beauchamp's essay "Technology in the Dystopian Novel" gives insight into this topic that can also be applied toward analyzing how insularity of setting is established in *The Mark*. Written many years before the Left Behind series, Beauchamp's essay reviews the theme of technology in many important works of dystopian literature. In his work, differing approaches to technology are shown. Primarily, two fields of applying technology in the dystopia are shown. One shows technology as a tool being used by those in control to help maintain their control of society, such as in Orwell's *1984*. The other shows technology becoming able to control itself and dictate society, as in E. M. Forster's "The Machine Stops." Beauchamp states, "The typical view of dystopists nevertheless holds technology to be an autonomous force that dictates the ideology of the future" (57). There are variations to these views within each dystopia, but technology is a key element in the enforcement of ideology and insularity in dystopian literature.

Although not directly about *The Mark* or its authors, LaHaye and Jenkins, Beauchamp's essay is about a key element used to facilitate insularity within the novel: technology. Technology serves the antagonist, Carpathia, in achieving his goal of a one-world government, so in this way, technology is used in the novel as a tool.

Technology is also used to monitor people and to keep track of who is part of the system. In a unique twist on this dystopian use of technology, the protagonists also readily use technology for the advancement of their causes. In these ways, Beauchamp's overview of technology in dystopian literature can serve as a means to compare and contrast its use as a key element of the dystopian imagination in *The Mark*.

After review and analysis of criticism related either directly or indirectly to *The Mark: The Beast Rules the World*, the historical context and key dystopian features related to the globalized society and technology of this novel can be seen. LaHaye and Jenkins have written a unique piece of literature that combines biblical interpretation, the evangelical imagination, apocalyptic visions, and dystopian themes. The criticism of the novel, however, is light on direct study of literary elements found within it. More specifically, the study of *The Mark* as a work of dystopian literature is one area of scholarship that is lacking. A focused look at the dystopian motif of insularity of setting can contribute to bringing this novel and the series as a whole into the discourse on the utopian/dystopian imagination. The novel's unique usage of the dystopian motif of insularity of setting, and how the motif is established, deserves further study by tracing insularity from a historical context in the utopian/dystopian imagination and showing how it relates to the insularity found in *The Mark*.

Tracing Insularity of Setting in Dystopian/Utopian Works of the Past

A look at prominent dystopian and utopian texts from the past will help to show how insularity of setting plays a key role in the dystopian/utopian imagination. Two novels that display insularity of setting within the dystopia are George Orwell's *1984* and Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*. In Orwell's *1984*, insularity of setting is displayed within the dystopian society of Oceania with its highly controlling government, extreme surveillance, and lack of vision to the outside world. The protagonist, Winston Smith, lives in London, which is part of Airstrip One in Oceania. Winston lives in this dystopian setting, giving the reader a view from the inside. From the very beginning, the narrator details the mindset Winston and others have about being watched by the government. The narrator shows the reader a poster that says, "BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU" (Orwell 2), and then gives the reader insight about one method of surveillance, the telescreen: "The telescreen received and transmitted simultaneously. Any sound that Winston made . . . would be picked up by it" (3). By doing this, Orwell makes the setting close in on the reader, showing the insularity in which citizens of Airstrip One exist. This insularity of being watched in and confined to a world that does not allow for free thought or movement, or even vision to the outside world, except that which Big Brother allows through propaganda, is continued throughout the novel. This idea of watched confinement and its effect on humans is

displayed in an essay by Harry Strub titled "The Theory of Panoptical Control: Bentham's Panopticon and Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*." In this essay, Strub concludes that "the theory of panoptical control is based upon the behavioral principle that so long as environmental cues can sustain the belief that one's behavior is being constantly monitored . . . avoidance behavior will be obtained" (52). By creating insularity of setting through the use of surveillance and control tactics, Big Brother is able to obtain the obedience of its citizens within the dystopia.

In Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451,* insularity of setting within the dystopia is displayed in many ways. The burning of books by the firemen shows that insight into any other knowledge outside of what the authoritative society allows is prohibited. The protagonist, Guy Montag, becomes aware of the insularity only when Clarisse McClellan begins asking him many questions. Clarisse asks, "Do you ever read any of the books you burn?" to which Montag responds laughingly, "That's against the law!" (Bradbury 5). McClellan asks question after question, showing a thirst for learning, which is unique in the insular society. Montag's wife, Mildred, personifies the insularity in the novel by being obsessed with her parlor walls and earbuds. She lives her life in a seemingly neutral-geared existence of being fed junk-food entertainment visually and auditorily. Her obsession with the virtual world of her parlor walls reflects a concern about modern television and media that Daphne Patai details in her essay "Ray Bradbury and the Assault on Free Thought" when she states, "We see into other people's lives (real or imaginary) in a way that seems increasingly unavailable in actual life" (42). Mildred is almost incapable of even wanting to interact with the real world. Mildred sees her entertainment as her actual family. Right after she turns her husband in for harboring books, she leaves their house and says, "Poor family, poor family, oh everything gone, everything, everything gone now" (Bradbury 108). Mildred is so caught up in the insular setting that virtual "family" members have become real to her. These virtual family members can be described as simulacra, which Helena Nee discusses in her essay "Manifestations of the Hyperreal in a Postmodern World." Nee states that Mildred's "goal is to stay in her 'play' world forever. She refers to the characters as her relatives and these people on the screen are now becoming . . . simulacra" (13). By showing insularity of setting in the prohibition of books and Mildred's virtual reality, Bradbury is able to create a dystopia that its citizens are able to see outside of only if they ask questions or attempt to engage with reality, which is almost impossible to find, as all books get burnt up and reality becomes full of simulacra.

Insularity of setting can be traced back in the utopian imagination to Thomas More's *Utopia*. The island of Utopia was literally and figuratively insular. In *Utopia*, Raphael Hythloday begins his description of Utopia by stating that "the island of the Utopians is two hundred miles across" (38). This first part of Hythloday's account is important in creating the insular setting for Utopia. It is an island nation that is sheltered from the outside world geographically. Utopia has its own political system,

social practices, religious practices, and economic system, all of which must be followed by citizens. These systems and practices create insularity within the society of Utopia. Unlike the common view that comes from within dystopian insularity, Hythloday views Utopia's insularity as an outsider. He sees the nation as idealistic; however, some of Utopia's insularity is less idealistic and comes from penalizing transgressors or those who do not accept its systems and practices. Hythloday notes that if the population grows too large, Utopia will send citizens to the mainland to occupy unused land. There, "if the natives will not join in living under their laws, the Utopians drive them out . . . and if they resist make war on them" (More 49). This shows that Utopia is not as tolerant as the reader might expect from an ideal place. The nation protects its insular system, even outside of the island, showing that the systems and practices are what truly create insularity in the setting.

For citizens on the island of Utopia, travel is limited and needs to be permitted by local authorities. As Hythloday details, "Anyone who takes upon himself to leave his district without permission . . . is treated with contempt . . . and severely punished. If he is bold enough to try it a second time, he is made a slave" (More 53). Movement and free will are limited in this insular setting. One difference between More's *Utopia* and modern utopian works is the historical utopia's ability to be isolated and hidden from the world. In "Varieties of Literary Utopias," author Northrop Frye comments that "technology tends to unify the whole world. The concept of an isolated utopia . . . evaporates in the face of this fact" (216). The reader of modern utopian literature can see that in order to create insularity, an author must create insularity within a society's systems, similarly to the island of Utopia's system of laws, which isolates its citizens from the outside world. One must accept the insularity of Utopia and its systems and practices in order to go unpunished. In this way, the insularity of setting within More's *Utopia* shows characteristics similar to those in dystopian literature.

The motif of insularity of setting within the dystopia is prevalent throughout the history of the utopian imagination. Even in More's *Utopia*, insularity of setting can be seen as potentially dangerous when in governmental control. Insularity can mean geographic and social protection in Utopia, but it can also mean limited freedom and isolation from ideas outside of the insular society. This idea of governmental control of insularity is taken to extremes in Orwell's *1984* and Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*. The dystopia begins where the utopian idea of insularity is magnified to a point where free will and freedom to think for oneself are diminished. In *1984*, Big Brother uses surveillance and severe punishment to gain control of Oceania's citizens, increasing the insularity in that society. In *Fahrenheit 451*, Captain Beatty and the government in control of Guy Montag's society use book burning to suppress free thinking. Technology, in the form of parlor walls and earbuds, is also used to create insularity in Bradbury's novel by detaching humans from reality, as personified in Mildred Montag, thus creating an insular society that does not want to face reality. The novel *The Mark: The Beast Rules the World* uses this same element of insularity within the postrapture

world of the Left Behind series. Insularity on a global scale is created as the world's leader, Satan in Nicolae Carpathia's body, establishes and enacts a loyalty mark that individuals must take in order to be part of the Global Community society. In *The Mark*, the majority of citizens are more than willing to be obedient to Satan's system, partly because of the threat on their physical bodies and partly because of their infatuation with Carpathia's power and persuasion. This obedience to governmental control is similar to that seen in the citizens of Utopia, Oceania, and the city of *Fahrenheit 451*. Tracing insularity of setting within the utopian imagination and applying it to *The Mark* makes apparent that although insularity can be tied to physical and geographical location, it is more clearly seen in the societal insularity of a suppressive government. The Global Community of Nicolae Carpathia shows that insularity can be on a global scale within the dystopian imagination.

Insularity of Setting in The Mark: The Beast Rules the World

In *The Mark: The Beast Rules the World*, by Timothy LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins, the dystopian motif of insularity of setting is envisioned on a global scale, connecting humans via a singular economic, religious, social, and political system that has zero tolerance for nonadherence. The antagonist, Nicolae Carpathia, embodies the global system that leads to creating the insular society and setting of the novel. The Global Community is the singular governmental system of the world, and Carpathia is the head of it. Carpathia is also the object of worship of the one-world religion, Carpathianism. Loyalty to the man, Carpathia, and to his system of government is preeminent. Part of this system, and the driving narrative of the novel, is the requirement for all people to receive a "mark of loyalty" (LaHaye and Jenkins 84), that "consist[s] of the name of His Excellency or the prescribed number" (85). Carpathia describes this process and the punishment if it is not accepted as "certain unfortunately necessary controls on the citizenry" (83). The reader and protagonists are aware that Carpathia is indwelt by Satan, but the majority of global citizens view Carpathia as an infallible god. The citizens of the world who willingly accept the mark, or plan to accept as soon as possible, are blind to any other viewpoint than that which Carpathia puts forth, reinforcing insularity in the global society.

The novel begins to quickly establish insularity of setting in chapter one by showing how Carpathia himself consumes the attention of all people. When David Hassid, one of the protagonists in the Tribulation Force, is introduced to the reader, he is being confronted with images of Nicolae Carpathia in the city of New Babylon: "He could barely turn his eyes from the gigantic screens. . . . The image of the indefatigable Nicolae Carpathia, freshly risen from three days dead, filled the screen and crackled with energy" (LaHaye and Jenkins 1). The role of technology is used to help distribute the insularity of setting in a way that is reminiscent of Orwell's telescreens and Big Brother posters in the beginning of *1984*. David, in his search for Annie, is confronted

not only with this broadcast of Carpathia but also with numerous citizens excitedly scrambling to see Carpathia in person. Carpathia has developed his devoted following through the mass communication of his image and resurrection. This development of a following via mass communication and propaganda is like what Anita Pisch describes concerning the ability of such personality cults to develop in modern times: "Modern personality cults are possible due to the capability to disseminate images of the leader and his achievements over wide distances and to saturate public space" (50). The personality cult of Carpathia helps create insularity by consuming the affections of the masses. David Hassid does not join in the Carpathia fever, beginning a pattern of protagonists in *The Mark* who live in the dystopia but avoid becoming part of it, giving the reader a glimpse from inside the insular dystopian setting.

Hassid is located in New Babylon, a Middle Eastern city, but the insularity of Carpathia's system is not limited geographically to this area. The novel switches back and forth between Hassid in the Middle East and the core group of the Tribulation Force, who are located in Chicago. The Tribulation Force is based in an abandoned office building in Chicago, where they organize missions and communicate via computers, phones, and radios to other Christians in order to help each other survive within the dystopian setting and impede the efforts of Carpathia to establish and enforce his Global Community system. David Hassid provides inside information and access to the Global Community's computer systems for the Tribulation Force. In this way, the insularity of setting is stretched across the globe. All people are subject to the same repressed society and suppressive government, or what could be described as a dystopian "global monoculture" (Baccolini and Moylan 8). The Tribulation Force is subject to being spied on and found out by the same Global Community forces as those active in New Babylon. Rayford Steele tells Albie, "Never know what satellite imaging shows. . . . We could be sleeping soundly while GC Security and Intelligence forces snap our pictures from the stratosphere" (LaHaye and Jenkins 8). Once again, insularity of setting is facilitated through technology, creating a dystopia that the protagonists must secretly work within in order to help other Christians who do not want to become part of Carpathia's system.

As the novel continues, insularity of setting continues to be shown as Rayford Steele and Albie work as undercover Global Community officers in their attempt to rescue Hattie Durham, a nonbeliever whom the Tribulation Force has been trying to lead to becoming a Christian. Hassid assists in this by infiltrating the computer systems of the Global Community, giving the men credentials and permissions to operate within the dystopia: "David often overrode other GC systems to send such directives in a way that they could not be traced back to him" (LaHaye and Jenkins 35). The protagonists cannot move freely within the society without either hiding from the Global Community or appearing as one of the GC. The permissions needed to move about closely resemble the permissions needed to move between regions on More's island of Utopia. Christian protagonists in *The Mark* are all constantly at risk of being

found out, which would lead not only to their own death or punishment but possibly also to the demise of others in the protagonist group.

Nevertheless, the Tribulation Force members risk their lives in hopes of evangelizing others who have not committed to the Global Community, showing a hope in the utopian future they believe is coming at the second coming of Christ. This utopian hope within the insularity of a dystopia is a foundational principle of utopianism as described by Darko Suvin: "Utopianism is an orientation toward a horizon of radically better forms of relationships among people" (187). LaHaye and Jenkins have taken the basic principle of utopianism and displayed it within the insular dystopian setting of *The Mark*. The protagonists are oriented toward a utopian horizon even while being in a dystopian world ruled by Satan.

The motif of insularity of setting builds to the point where Carpathia and his constituents come up with a plan that further enforces insularity through a system in which each person must take a loyalty mark. The mark of loyalty symbolizes everything Carpathia stands for and grants access to his insular society. This access is facilitated by the technology embedded in a biochip received in the mark, which Carpathia's loyal assistant, Viv Ivins, details: "We have settled on the technology. . . . The miniature biochip with the suffix numbers embedded in it can be inserted as painlessly as a vaccination" (LaHaye and Jenkins 86). And without the biochip, people "will not be allowed to buy or sell" (85). The entire world is subject to this loyalty system, and the numbers embedded in each mark are connected to "a listing of ten world regions . . . identifying the home regions of every citizen. The subsequent numbers . . . will further identify the person to the point where every one shall be unique" (85). This idea of everyone being unique contrasts sharply with the fact that all citizens will be sharing the same exact system of values, beliefs, economics, and political views.

As seen in other dystopian settings, citizens who do not follow the exact prescription for how to live life in such a suppressive society are punished. This loyalty mark system in *The Mark* sets up an insular society that beheads those who openly refuse it via "loyalty enforcement facilitators" (LaHaye and Jenkins 170), which are guillotines, and grants no access to the economic system for those who hide from the Global Community. The Tribulation Force and fellow Christians become further isolated within the dystopia and must hide in order to avoid having to openly refuse the mark and face death. This punishment process facilitates the creation of insularity of setting with medieval technology, and this technology is displayed openly to the public, as can be seen when Laslos discusses the parading of guillotines: "The GC is carting them through town in open trucks so the people can see the consequences of thinking for themselves" (263–264). The suppression of free thought in *The Mark* further strengthens insularity of setting in a way similar to that of Bradbury's firemen, who burn books, suppressing access to free thought. At another point in *The Mark*,

Ming Toy pleads with David to help free her brother, Chang Wong, and confesses she is "thinking with [her] heart" (279), to which David responds, "Nothing wrong with that . . . until we quit thinking at all and make things worse" (279). Once again, free thought stands in contrast to the ideology of an insular dystopian society.

The harshest realities of creating insularity of setting are seen in *The Mark* when the beheading process begins at prison facilities. Buck Williams and Albie are undercover, trying to free Christians in a prison beginning the loyalty enforcement process when they witness the beheadings of several who refuse the mark. Insularity of setting becomes even more real through this gross display of disloyalty punishment. As Maria Varsam states in her essay "Concrete Dystopia: Slavery and Its Others," "In dystopian texts, public as well as privately enforced violence and its threat ensure the obedience of the less powerful" (212). The prisoners are exposed to the immediate threat of capital punishment for refusing the loyalty mark, which leads to compliance from most. Mrs. Miklos and the first women to refuse the mark and accept death exemplify Christian martyrs of times past as the narrator states, "They would join the great blood-washed who literally made their bodies living sacrifices" (LaHaye and Jenkins 302). Mrs. Miklos is beaten horrifically before being led to the guillotine. As she is going, Buck passes along a message from her husband, to which she says, "Tell Laslos thank you for leading me to Jesus. I see him. I see him. I see my Savior and can't wait to be with him!" (303). Mrs. Miklos, even while being beaten and led to her death, has a hope in a utopian future that her current imprisoned, beaten, and death-bound dystopian existence cannot touch. As the narrator notes at the end of this scene of beheadings, Buck "stood in the cool grass, convulsing now in dry heaves, [and] covered his ears in a vain attempt to muffle the thuds and cheers, thuds and cheers" (305). LaHaye and Jenkins show the ugliness of the dystopian society that cheers at the death of others. Through this loyalty enforcement, insularity of setting is shown to ultimately lead to a choice between taking part in the dystopian society or accepting death or dismissal from the society.

Conclusion

The utopian/dystopian imagination has a long literary history filled with variations of general motifs and common elements that adapt to the times, desires, and visions of the authors creating it. Insularity of setting is one motif that shares both classic utopian literary usage, as traced in More's *Utopia,* and dystopian usage, as traced in Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* and Orwell's *1984.* By the tracing of its usage and how it facilitates the creation of both utopian and dystopian worlds, insularity of setting is shown as a key literary element within the entire utopian imagination. Typically, insularity of setting is used in the more negative sense, especially in the dystopian imagination. Although utopias and dystopias are polar opposites, or extremes, it is clear that insularity of setting shows itself in both cases.

In the dystopian world, through tracing insularity of setting in the works of Orwell, Bradbury, and now LaHaye and Jenkins, it is apparent that this motif is often facilitated by technology in some way, acting as a unifying and controlling force. Orwell's dystopia in *1984* is filled with references to technology being used as surveillance to help control the citizenry. In Bradbury's dystopia in *Fahrenheit 451*, technology is used to control the citizenry through mind-numbing information and entertainment, as displayed by the parlor walls. In LaHaye and Jenkins's *The Mark*, technology is used to unite all people through a loyalty mark system, facilitated by an injectable biochip and a database that creates a one-world community. The creation of insularity of setting, however, is most dependent upon the enforcement of a strict system of social, economic, political, and religious practices. This system is what actually establishes insularity, and it can be seen in both dystopian and utopian instances.

By studying insularity of setting in its historical context within dystopian and utopian works, we can better understand it as an extreme, confining system that must be adhered to by citizens within the utopia or dystopia and that, if they do not adhered to it, the citizens are excluded, expelled, punished, or even killed. *The Mark* displays this type of insularity brilliantly on a global scale using the framework of rapture fiction. Insularity can be thought of as coming from isolation from the rest of the world, and this is true in a sense, but within *The Mark*, insularity of setting can be seen better as a system that confines its citizens to a globally unified set of social, political, economic, and religious beliefs. In this way, the entire globe is isolated in the Global Community and Carpathianism. Through the tracing and studying of the dystopian motif of insularity of setting within *The Mark*, the novel can be better understood as a work of dystopian literature coming from the subgenre of rapture fiction. *The Mark: The Beast Rules the World* can then be viewed and appreciated as a work of dystopian literature that draws from the same fountain as other utopian and dystopian works, but in a way that is unique to the vision, desire, and times of its authors.

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